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COUNTRY Austria

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SUPPLEMENT

ORIGIN  
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1. According to the official records of the Austrian Finanzamt fuer Verkehrssteuern, the Stern Verlag, the Austrian Communist publishing house, was founded on 14 June 1945. a contract was drawn up on that date by Dr. Heinrich Oberndorfer, notary, of Praterstrasse 15, Vienna II. The publishing house is located at Spitalgasse 31, Vienna IX. Its owners are Dr. Arpad Haas and Hermann Langbein, both of Wasagasse 10. Each of these contributed 25,000 Reichsmarks to the founding of the company. Franz Freihaut was appointed managing director, and the legal affairs of the firm were entrusted to attorney Dr. Johann Dostal of Praterstrasse 26, Vienna II.

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2. [REDACTED] Stadtrat Dr. Viktor Matejka (CP) furnished Freihaut a certificate to the effect that he was a former concentration camp inmate. It appears from the statement, however, that Freihaut was not a prisoner but was commercially engaged in the Dachau camp as head of the carpenter shop, where 1600 - 1800 prisoners worked.
3. The following information has been obtained on Hermann Langbein:
- Hermann Langbein was born on 18 May 1912 in Vienna. He is an Austrian citizen and single. He present address is Weigandhof 5, c/o Dr. Otto Langbein, Wasserturmsiedlung, Vienna X. Otto Langbein, his brother, is a secretary of the Communist Party. He was born on 7 December 1910 in Vienna.
  - In 1937 Hermann Langbein was sentenced to four months' imprisonment for activities inimical to the State.
  - Hermann Langbein and his brother, Otto, are the sons of a newspaper correspondent and a school teacher; they received a good education. Their father, although not very active politically, sympathized with the Communist Party until his death in 1934. At that time, Otto was unemployed and Hermann was an actor. In 1934, when the Communist Party was banned in Austria, the brothers began holding Communist meetings at their home. These meetings became so frequent and so large that they attracted the attention of the Austrian police, who arrested both brothers. Hermann was known to have distributed the Communist newspaper Die Rote Fahne. The

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brothers are reported to have fought on the Loyalist side in the Spanish Civil War. When the Germans entered Austria, the two fled to France, where Hermann was later arrested by the Gestapo and sent to a concentration camp. Otto, who was seriously ill, returned to Vienna. Hermann returned to Vienna in 1945 and became a leading figure at Communist headquarters. By that time, Otto was already an important member of the Communist Party.

- d. The two live a quiet life; a Communist Party vehicle frequently calls for them, and trucks brought them fuel and packages during the winter.
- e. Physical descriptions: Hermann Langbein is about 165 cm tall, slender, has an oval face, bald head, blue eyes, and is always well-dressed. Otto Langbein is about 180 cm tall, stout; has dark blond, wavy hair. He is well-fed and well-dressed.

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- a. Franz Freihaut, manager of the Stern Verlag, was born on 25 March 1902 in Vienna. He is an Austrian citizen and is married to Josefina Zika, who was born on 22 April 1905 in Vienna. Present address: Theresienbadgasse 4, III/31, Vienna XII. Freihaut was under arrest for three days on charges of using false identity documents.
- b. Freihaut is the son of a carpenter; he became a Communist in his youth and was in frequent trouble with the police because of his political activity. In 1925, he joined the Austrian Army, but it is not known how long he served. It is believed that he was in Moscow prior to 1938, but there is no evidence to this effect except that his daughter, Helene, was born in Moscow in 1936. In 1938 Freihaut was in Vienna again, and in 1939 he was arrested by the Gestapo and sent to Dachau. [REDACTED] This appears to conflict with para. 2 above.) There he was a sort of foreman over hundreds of other prisoners. He was released from the camp in 1945 and returned to Vienna. Freihaut's wife and child returned from England some time later. In 1945, he became manager of the Stern Verlag.

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- c. Freihaut and his family live a quiet life and receive few visitors; they are known to be Communists but have never been heard to spread propaganda.
- d. Description of Freihaut: About 165 cm tall; slender; has oval face; dark, sparse, slightly graying hair; dark eyes.

5. Regarding Johann Dostal, the following information has been obtained:

- a. Dr. Johann Dostal, lawyer, was born 7 March 1901 in Graz; he is an Austrian citizen; married to Kaethe Friedl, born 30 July 1903 in Prosenitz. Address: Lothringerstrasse 16/12, Vienna III.
- b. Dostal, whose office is at Praterstrasse 26, Vienna II, always had a good practice except during the Nazi period when the fact that his wife was Jewish made things difficult for him. Prior to 1934, Dostal was a member of the Socialist Party and played a role in the February Revolution. He was arrested by the Gestapo on charges of treason, but was released within a few months. During the German occupation he was also compelled to dismiss all his employees. It was at this time that he became friendly with Dr. Karl Altmann, Communist Minister of Electrification in the Austrian Government.
- c. Shortly before the end of the war, Dostal left home to avoid conscription. After his return he joined the Communist Party and became the official legal adviser of the Party. Once a week, on Tuesday, he visits the Communist headquarters in Wasagasse to give legal advice to Party members.
- d. Physical description: About 185 cm tall, strongly-built; dark blond hair, parted; blue eyes; near-sighted, wears glasses.

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[REDACTED]: Dostal is believed to be identical with Attorney Dr. Dostal, one of the General Counsellors of the Austrian National Bank.)

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6. Preliminary investigation of Stern Verlag has not revealed any information concerning the way in which the firm receives its policy direction. It is noted that both Arpad Haas and Langbein registered as being from Masagasse 10 (Communist Party headquarters in Vienna) when the publishing house was incorporated. Haas' role as a liaison man for the Comintern in the past is fairly well-known. No indication of direct Soviet control was observed during the investigation.
7. The Stern Verlag publishes works of general interest in addition to standard Communist booklets and works on Soviet art, literature, and culture. Between twenty and thirty persons are employed.

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